

## **Work and Vocational Rehabilitation in Dually Diagnosed Veterans**

VISN 1 MIRECC researchers have found that veterans with combined mental illness and substance abuse (dual diagnosis) fare better than those with mental illness alone in the VA's Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) programs. Among patients with mental illness, dual diagnosis is common and usually predicts worse treatment outcome and poorer social functioning. The current study looked at whether this trend held up in the records from over 25,000 CWT participants. Contrary to the well established pattern of finding greater disability associated with drug abuse, dually diagnosed veterans performed better than those with mental illness alone on work functioning, participation in vocational rehabilitation and employment outcome. Some of the advantage for dually diagnosed patients may be explained by other differences between the two groups including younger age and higher educational level in those with dual diagnosis. However, the important message of these findings is that work and vocational functioning may represent one area where dual diagnosis is not a disadvantage. Potentially, clinicians and program administrators working with dually diagnosed patients may want to take advantage of this possible area of strength by focusing on work goals and vocational rehabilitation to support other clinical efforts. The researcher team included Charles Drebing, Rick Fleitas, Anshan Moore, Christopher Krebs, Alice Van Ormer, Walter Penk, Catherine Seibyl and Robert Rosenheck.